

## Michelle Segre: Exploring Ephemeral Artistry



Since my initial review of Michelle Segre’s work in 2014, I’ve observed her fascination with cosmic phenomena, such as nebulas—diffuse astronomical formations—intensify. She incorporates unusual materials like colored yarn, dried mushrooms, and decomposing bread into her art. At first, I didn’t fully grasp how her creative approaches challenge traditional boundaries between objects and pictorial images, and between sculpture and painting. By merging these distinctions, Segre has carved out her unique space, both philosophically insightful and formally groundbreaking.

Segre’s inventive fusion of sculpture and painting became clearer during my visit to her current show, *Nebula*, at Derek Eller Gallery. The exhibition features a singular, predominantly bright red piece. In a world accustomed to abundance, we often overlook the details. “Nebula” (2025) invites viewers to examine it meticulously from multiple perspectives. Positioned centrally in the gallery, the piece encourages viewers to circle it, akin to dancing around a maypole.

The artwork features a flat shape resembling a thought bubble, a mysterious landmass, or a fiery plume, all rising from a vertical cement base. Crafted from reddish acrylic polymer, the form is loosely outlined with steel wire, fringed with red yarn trailing to the floor. This yarn creates dynamic, fiery lines, acting as a threshold curtain between realms. A spiraling wire embedded within the form intertwines with black thread clusters, presenting both two and three-dimensional aspects—a fiery red surface within, framed by tangible yarn lines, creating a spatial drawing.

Segre's mastery of color is evident as the amorphous polymer shifts from orange to crimson. Her work provokes wild, unexpected associations. While contemplating the abstract form, a large clump of brown sheep fleece connected to the yarn came into view. Materially, the fleece links to the red yarn strands on the wire frames, evoking themes of fire and transformation, hinting at destruction and rebirth.

By integrating transient materials, Segre acknowledges the physical world's perpetual cycle of destruction and potential. Her creations are open to temporal influences, contrasting with the permanence of works by Jeff Koons and his contemporaries, and the enduring association of sculpture and empire. Sensitive to air currents, "Nebula" becomes a testament to change.

Michelle Segre: Nebula is on display at Derek Eller Gallery (38 Walker Street, Ground Floor, Tribeca, Manhattan) until February 14. The exhibition was curated by the gallery.

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*By Sarah Mitchell — Exhibitions & Programs Correspondent*